

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BGEN EEWT UR US
SUBJECT: UNION CARBIDE EMPLOYEES AT POLYETHYLENE FACILITY IN USSR

1. ON JULY 13, EMANUEL HOFFMAN, MANAGER FOR EMPLOYEE RELATIONS OF UNION CARBIDE EUROPE CALLED ON E/C COUNSELOR TO DISCUSS PROSPECTIVE PRESENCE OF SIX TO EIGHT UNION CARBIDE EMPLOYEES AT POLYETHYLENE MANUFACTURING PLANT TO BE CONSTRUCTED AT BUDENOVSK, NEAR MINERAL'NYYE VODY. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY B J BARDRICK, SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER, CONSTRUCTORS JOHN BOWN LTD., WHICH IS PRESENTLY BUILDING THE PLANT. BARDRICK STATED THAT THE FACILITY WILL BE THE LARGEST OF ITS KIND IN EUROPE, PRODUCING 200,000 TONS OF POLYETHYLENE ANNUALLY WHEN IT REACHES CAPACITY. HOFFMAN EXPLAINED THAT UNION CARBIDE WILL PROVIDE THE TECHNOLOGY. DURING THE PERIOD WHEN THE PLANT WILL BE PUT INTO COMMISSION - A PERIOD BARDRICK ESTIMATED COULD RANGE FROM FOUR TO EIGHTEEN MONTHS - UNION CARBIDE PERSONNEL WILL RESIDE ON SITE.

2. HOFFMAN EXPLAINED THAT UNION CARBIDE HAD SOME BAD EXPERIENCES AT A SIMILAR CONSTRUCTION SITE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
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(SALUZI/MOST), WHERE THE EMPLOYEES HAD UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT VOWED NEVER AGAIN TO WORK UNDER SIMILAR CONDITIONS. THE TARGET DATE FOR THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS IS PRESENTLY LATE 1978 BUT ACCORDING TO BARDRICK, A MORE PRUDENT FORECAST WOULD BE FOR 1979. PRIOR TO THAT DATE UNION CARBIDE WILL HAVE RECRUIT SIX OR EIGHT SPECIALISTS AND GIVE THEM FAIR ADVANCE WARNING OF WHAT THEY MAY EXPECT

LIVING IN THE USSR.

3. COUNSELOR MENTIONED CUSTOMARY PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY OTHER AMERICANS LIVING IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES IN USSR AND EMPHASIZED WISDOM OF WRITING AS MANY PROTECTIVE FEATURES INTO CONTRACT AS POSSIBLE, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO VISAS, INTERNAL TRAVEL AND ON-SITE COMMUNICATIONS. HOFFMAN NOTED THAT IN THIS CASE CONTRACT IS ALREADY SIGNED. BARDRICK STATED THAT CONSTRUCTORS JOHN BROWN EMPLOYEES HAD BEEN GIVEN GOOD TREATMENT TO DATE, WITH ONE EMERGENCY EVACUATION OCCURRING ON A SATURDAY HANDLED BY WITH DISPATCH. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT EMPLOYEES MUST FILE WRITTEN TRAVEL REQUESTS WHICH MUST BE TRUCKED MANY MILES, ARE CLOSELY RESTRICTED TO WORK SITE, HAVE POOR COMMUNICATIONS, ETC. ALTHOUGH SOVIETS HAVE "IMPLIED" THAT JOHN BROWN COULD SEND FAMILIES, THE COMPANY HAS NOT ENCOURAGED THIS, AND NO DEPENDENTS ARE ON SITE. WHEN COUNSELOR INQUIRED WHERE SIX TO EIGHT UNION CARBIDE PERSONNEL MIGHT BE HOUSED, BARDRICK SAID THAT FOUR APARTMENTS ARE IN CONTRACT BUT THAT MORE MIGHT BE AVAILABLE LATER.

4. COMMENT: THERE ARE SOME OBVIOUS POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR UNION CARBIDE PERSONNEL WHO MAY BE LIVING ON SITE FOR AS LONG AS 18 MONTHS. ALTHOUGH HOUSING FOR JOHN BRWON EMPLOYEES MAY POSSIBLY COMPARE FAVORABLY WITH QUARTERS WHICH ACCORDING TO HOFFMAN, BOTHERED UNION CARBIDE WORKERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AT ZALUZI/MOST,
WE SUSPECT THAT THE SENSE OF ISOLATION IN THE CAUCASUS COULD MAKE BOHEMIA SEEM MORE LIKE PARIS. UNION CARBIDE APPEARS TO BE SOMEWHAT HANDICAPPED IN THAT DIRECT ACCESS TO SOVIETS IS THROUGH BRITISH CONSTRUCTION FIRM. ALTHOUGH LATTER HAS BEEN BUILDING PLANTS IN USSR FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BARDRICK ADMITTED THAT CONTRACTS TEND TO CONTAIN SAME CLAUSES AS THOSE SET BY PRECEDENTS IN AN EARLIER ERA, WHEN SOVIETS WERE EVEN LESS DISPOSED TO BE LIBERAL TOWARDS FOREIGN TECHNICIANS. WE ENCOURAGED UNION CARBIDE TO LOSE NO OPPORTUNITY TO PRESS SOVIETS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE HOUSING, RECREATION, COMMUNICATION AND TRAVEL POSSIBILITIES, BUT LEFT NO ILLUSIONS THAT CONCESSIONS WOULD BE EASY TO ACHIEVE AT THIS POINT.
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